(15)

A PLOT

To Disseize GOD of his RIGHT DEFEATED:

AND

The CONTRIVERS Punished.

DISCOVERED IN

A SERMON

Preached in the Cathedral of S. *Paul*,

on the 15th. of *September*, 1661.

Before the Right Honorable

Sir *RICHARD BROWNE*

Knight and Baronet,

Lord Mayor of the City of *LONDON*.

By THO. WOOD, M.A.

LONDON,

Printed by *W. Godbid* for *R. Thrale* at the *Crosse Keys* at S. *Paul's* Gate entring into *Cheapside*. *M. DC. LXI.*

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To the Right Worshipful

The Lady LENNARD

of *West-Wickham* in *Kent*: and

The Lady HARFLETE

of S. *Stephens* neer *Canterbury*:

Grace and Happiness.

MADAMS,

I Have observed in you both (which was partly a reason of joyning you together in this Dedication) a constant respect (in the worst Times) towards the Old Clergy, when the firmament of our Church was sadly and totally over-cast, with Black Clouds of *Novelliſme* and *Hereſie*; even then your Aspects were benigne and gracious, and rais'd the drooping spirits of the *Orthodox Professors* round about you. I bless you for it, and God for you, who is faithful, and will most certainly put it to your account at the general Day of Retribution.

Particularly, I (the meanest in the Lords Vineyard, and save for my sufferings, hardly considerable) have (in reference to my Calling) receiv'd many Civilities from you, and must profess, that as I always honour'd you both, more for your goodness than your greatness, so I conceiv'd my self oblig'd in

gratitude to a publick acknowledgment, and wanting other means, have presum'd upon this way. *Madams*, let it meet (I beseech you) with a favourable interpretation. 'Tis a small *Peice*, and was the fruit of my younger Studies. If the Style be somewhat Lofty, 'twas like my Thoughts when I compos'd it. Age and the Calamities of the Nation (in which I had a share) have since broken and humbled mee. And 'tis impossible (without the wonder of a Miracle) I should be made whole & rais'd but by *Dissolution*. *Madams*, I commend it to you onely as a Remembrancer, being able to add little to your Accomplishments in matters of Information. It hath been preach'd in Three several great Assemblies, and (upon the request of some Friends) is, (such as it is) sent abroad into the world. I fear not much but 'twill indure the test, and meet with the same good liking in the Reading, which it had the happiness to do in the respective Deliveries of it. It must needs pass the more currant with all that know your Ladyships, if you deign to stamp it with your acceptance and approbations. I pray for you, and your Right Worshipful Bedfellows. I rest,

MADAMS,

Your hearty Honorer and Servant in Christ Jesus,

THO. WOOD.

1 Kings. 1. 7.

And he took Counsel of Joab *the son of* Zeruiah, *and of* Abiathar *the Priest, and they helped forward of* Adonijah.

My Design in the choice of this Scripture is to discover to this Honourable Corporation (and others of this great Assembly) A Plot. *Not an imaginary one, such as (for ends of State) you have had heretofore many obtruded upon you, but a real Plot.* A Plot *tending to no less then the Disseizing of the Lord* Paramount *of Heaven and Earth, God Almighty, of his right; withall, if the time will allow it, to manifest the* Power *of the same God in the* Defeatment of it, and his Justice *in the deserved punishment upon the* Delinquents.

I have (not long since in a neighbour Assembly) entred upon this Argument, and by some (that are somewhat prevailing with me) am desired to finish it here. The opening of the Story must not be omitted, for 'tis that which must give Light to every piece of the ensuing Discourse; Several points will appear very intricate and dark in their Derivation without this. I desire to make my way plain before me, and rather to run the hazzard of censure for somewhat a large repetition, then for Obscurity.

IN This Chapter we have two Brethren Competitors, scuffling hard which shall mount the first Chariot in *Israel*. Either had read his thoughts such a lofty Lecture, that like those great Roman Corrivals, they can indure nor Superior nor Equal. A Kingdome is the prize they run for, Either strain the harder, as knowing he that loseth, loseth something of Natures Priviledge, and must fall so much beneath a Brother, as (upon

Humour or State-occasion) to be reckon'd for no other then a Subject, a Servant. That which awakes them into action, and puts life into their Resolutions, is the hourly expectation and Likelyhood of the long and last Sleep of their Father in Death. *David*, though a King, and so a God by his Office, yet by nature he was a man; and so, like the rest of Mankind, must dye. His able Shoulders had for a good space of time undergone their share in the Burden of Government (as a subordinate Assistant) during the Reign of his Predecessor *Saul*, and for nere Forty years he had steer'd the Affairs of State in chief; so that now he was far gone into the second Infancy of his Life, and could not continue long, as having (at least) one foot on the Threshold of the House appointed for all Living. This makes these two Brethren whom it only concern'd, the one by nature, the other by promise, to bethink them early of their Interests: And because in such a weighty affair, bare right (by the secret judgement of God, and neglect of due afforded means for its supportation) doth sometimes miscarry, they underprop and fortifie it with the association of such Friends, whose Power and Authority in the State, might almost without the justice of any Title, give credit and countenance to an adventurous Undertaker.

Adonijah is the first that steps up the Stage to act his part, and he comes bravely on with Chariots and Horse; and 50. Men to run before him. *Vers.* 5. We may take a measure of him in the *6. Verse*, and that from three material Circumstances, his Education, Personage, and Birth; all (me-thinks) after a sort prophecy and forespeak what he intended, and seems to point him out not to a meaner Fortune then a Kingdome.

First, The King, his Fathers Affection towards him was not to be doubted of; when *David* was a Man, and his Son a Child, he never displeased him, and 'twas not likely he would now go about to crosse him, when himself was become Child, and his Son Man. He lov'd him but too well (as we have a Say.) His continual indulgent cockering Carriage toward him we find noted in the Text, and in probability not only as a peice of the Fathers Infirmity, but of the Sons Incouragement too. Something there was in it or else the Holy Ghost would never have left it upon record, that *his Father would not displease him from his Childhood, to say, Why hast thou done so?* Secondly,

Secondly, Nature had plaid the Prodigal with him, and conferred on him much of her Bounty for his Body, *He was a goodly man to look upon*, saith the Text; and (if we'l credit the Conceits of some Philosophers) the parts of his Soul must then have been answerable. Indeed when we see a House more then ordinarily beautified without, we are apt to imagine the furniture within to be more then ordinary too. Rich Caskets are commonly made to hold more precious Jewels; and set aside divine Vertues (unlesse Theives (as Flattery) ill Education, or the like, have robb'd Us of them) 'twill not (perhaps) be extremely absurd to affirm the like of man. However comlinesse of personage (it must be confest) as the Loadstone doth Iron (by a secret yet irresistible force) attracts our Love and Liking, and like a Conquerour inslaves and captivates, compells our Affection. Had unnatural *Absolon* been this way unbefriended, I make a Question whether all his other Court Policies in wrigling, and insinuating himself into the favour of the People, had ever gaim'd so much upon them, as to have rais'd them in such multitudes to side with him against their Soveraign? *Adonijah* his Brother here hath the very same advantage, that which would have exceedingly much set off a private man, but a Prince as he was, more: as receiving from other Complements of such greatnesse a reciprocal addition of Lustre.

Thirdly, But there's another thing behind, which seems to be more available to his Ends then both these, and 'tis laid down in the words immediately preceeding the Text; *His Mother bare him*, &c. *His Mother bare him next after Absolon?* Why, what's that to the purpose? How comes this any way to advantage and promote his Cause? Yes, very much. *Ammon* the eldest Son (as we may read) was divers years before slain by *Absolon*; And *Absolon* the second Son again slain by *Joab*; and so as if they had never been, the natural right is devolv'd, and rests upon the next Surviver. If *Ammon* or *Absolon* were the eldest whilst they lived, *Adonijah* is so now they are dead. So that we see here that he hath the Priviledge of *Primogeniture*, and that alwayes (as we have a Proverb) carries *Meat in the Mouth of it*. By the very Law of God a double portion was due to it, and because Kingdomes admit not of Division, of Partition (in those that are

settled in a Succession) by the Law of God, of Nations, to the whole.

So that you see he hath Three strings to his Bowe, a threefold Cord to strengthen and assure his hopes, and that (his wise Brother tells us) is not easily broken.

But though his Tackling were thus good, yet like a discreet man he warily suspects and provides for a greater Tempest then was likely to happen. His Competitor was a youth, nay very little more then a Child: and such (we know) men desire not should Reign over them; a Child too of a Mother tainted formerly with the Stain of known Adultery; and that, questionlesse, bated him something too in the common opinion. And yet our Pretender is as careful to settle and assure his cause, as if his Corrival had been a well-grown man like himself, and had had too the start of him in reputation.

In weighty Affairs 'tis still the wisest and safest course to double the worst; to forecast the Extremity, and to prevent and provide for that. How many have lost an Inheritance, a Lordship, a Kingdome, nay (by somes leave) *Heaven it self by reckoning themselves but too sure on't.*

Adonijah here, was a man of another Temper: He hath a fair Game we see, which doth in a manner assure him the Stake, yet for all this like a wary adventurer, he remits nothing of his care, but playes it with all advice and deliberation possible: So in the Text, *And he took Counsell, &c.*

In which words we may consider the two parts of all great Enterprises; 1. *Consultation.* 2. *Action.* And this in hand being of that nature, we have of either a plain Description.

First, we have three plotting heads laid together, and so taken; (though one but young) perhaps not Three wiser between *Dan* and *Beersheba.*

Secondly, We have three pair of hands executing the contrivances of these heads.

For from either we must not exclude him whom it all concerns. The first word (*He*) makes him a Party in the Consultation; The last word (*Adonijah*) makes him so in the *Action.* His advice undoubtedly was not wanting in his own cause, nor stood he then by as an idle Spectatour, but as they helped him forward, so he too help'd forward himself.

The

The end, reason, and But which they drive at in both, is to make this younger head, *Head* both of Young and Old in *Israel*. To set him upon the Throne of his Father, and publickly in the face of the World to justifie his private-taken-up-resolution. *I will be King*, *vers.* 5.

This was their aim about this they consult.

I might here (for the first part of my Text) enter upon a Common place of *Counsell*. Be plentiful in Quotations of what divine and prophane Writers, Orators, Historians, Poets, have delivered in commendation of it.

I might too enlarge the praises of it from experience generally how 'tis of singular use, nay absolute necessity to the well managing of all weighty concerning Affairs, particularly in matters of Government; how 'tis the Steersman of a State, the Soul of all Sound Policy, and that which (next under Heaven) a Kingdome may chiefly thank for all its Happinesse, Peace, Plenty, every good thing. If in matters of War, how by it small things have confounded great; Ten men shut up a Thousand, an handful overthrown a Million. Amplified likewise further it might be from its contrary; What frequent examples there are in all Story of manifest and miserable inconveniencies, which men of all sorts have run themselves into by inconsiderate rashnesse and temerarious precipitation.

Again (from the second part of my Text) I might go on upon another head of Action, tell you, that 'tis this which renders Consultations, Illustrious; Counsells are dark things, begot in obscurity, and so nourished, and ordinarily shew not themselves to the World but by this. Indeed they are but Illusions, when Action is not design'd to back them: And as faith without works is but an abusive *misleading Chymera*, so 'tis here; Though Counsel seem to consist of more spiritual parts then Action, yet 'tis Action that makes the *Demonstration*; that raises out of the dust and gives Life and a Lasting Lustre to those *advices*, which else had perished like the untimely fruit of a Woman, and had never seen the Sun. This and more (upon these two heads) might be largely discours'd on, and the Text doth seem to warrant it; but I shall take leave to leave these general Considerations, and to fall up more closely, with the particularities of the Story.

In

In this Chapter then (as I told you, for substance in the beginning) we have a Kingdome at Stake, and Two Brethren Gamesters playing hard for it. The elder and more experienc'd, loseth, yet perhaps we cannot say 'twas so much his fault as his *destiny*.

He had Heaven against him, or else we might justly wonder he came not off the Winner: for, for his *Title* and *Likelyhoods* we have them in the precedent Verse, and in this the well managing of both, *He took Counsell, &c.*

Where first (to make way to my after Discourse) give me leave to observe that his ambition was better order'd and tutor'd then his Brother *Absolons*. I find not that he did any way *envy* or *undermine* his Fathers *honour*, or that he did so much as in a wish desire his Death. Let this be his *Piety*, sith Slighter hopes have made some Children so strangely unnatural as to do more to effect it. No such black thoughts came nere the Soul of our *Adonijah*, his ends and aims (for ought appears evidently from the Text) were more fair and justifiable; Not like his Brother to *un-King* his Father, but to reign after him; not to *depose* but to *succeed* him, was the summe of his Intentions; and who can blame an eldest Son for this? Make his case but your own, and (I believe) he'll be likely enough to go away not only not openly rebuked, but secretly incouraged; especially when he takes no grosly indirect, nay a seemingly fair and lawful course to compasse it. Confers his design too with those, who had it been *unlawful* should have directed him, his Ghostly Father *Abiathar*, and his experienc'd Cousin *Joab*. But these are as forward as he, and not only advise him, but afford their helping hands likewise in the businesse; *They helped forward Adonijah, &c.*

But I shall deal with *them* in an after Discourse, give me leave first to dispatch the worthier person.

And in him secondly, in every passage of the Text (considering the Affair in hand) I observe abundance of Wisdome and sound Policy.

First, That he does not go rashly to work, but takes *Counsell*.

Secondly, That he takes Counsel of such as were able to give it, and whose Countenance too, was as available as their Counsel. *And he took Counsel of Joab, &c.*

Thirdly,

That he doth impart these important privacies to such, whom formerly he had so firmly assur'd to himself, as to run the hazzard of their own Counsells, and really to engage themselves in it by Action. What they advise they do, *They helped, &c.*

First, He goes not headdily and rashly to work, but *Takes Counsell*; The Wise man saith, *There's more hope of a Fool then of a man hasty in matters*, *Prov.*29.20. And (if I remember right) *Charles* Duke of *Burgundy*, I have read, taxed for this kind of Folly, of whom somebody records, that he seldome asked, never followed the advice of others. To be so overwise in our own Conceits, as to despise or neglect the Counsell of our Friends, is a strong Argument of weakness, and hears ill among the very Heathen.

Agamemnon (a wise Prince) wisheth (in *Homer*) that he had Ten *Nestors* to consult withall; and a wiser then he tells us, that *in the multitude of Counsellors there is Safety*.

And indeed, however we find in Story some few suddain Actions to have succeeded well, yet their Glory is still blemish'd with the stain of rashness, and blind *Fortune*, more entituled to them then the undertakers. We have a Proverb amongst us somewhat to this purpose; *'Tis more by hap, then any good Cunning*. We cannot fasten this fault upon our *Adonijah*, he was no hasty inconsiderate *Hotspurre*; did not precipitate himself headlong into the business, *fall back*, *fall edge*, (as we have a word) but he looks before he *leaps*, chooseth his best ground for rising, goes on with wary advice and sound Deliberation. 'Tis the first point of his Wisdome, and in it I commend him as a Pattern for your Imitation; *In all weighty Affairs do as he did*, *Take Counsell*.

But secondly, some have judgement enough, to see into their own want of judgement, yet too little to make a fit Election of such as may inform them. They can perceive Counsell to be good, and in divers cases themselves to stand in need of it, yet have not attain'd to that happy height of Wisdome, to select and single out such as are best able to give it. *Rehoboam* nephew to our *Adonijah*, was one of this number; who refused to be guided by experience and gray hairs, but embraceth the raw and green advice of such as were like himself; and we may read it cost

him

him dear, the revolt of ten Tribes, five parts in six of his Kingdome, 1 *Kings* 12.

So was *Antiochus* the great too, in his war against the *Romans*, and *Xerxes* a greater then he, in his expedition into *Grecia*, both weakly followed the feeble counsel of their effeminate Courtiers, men utterly unacquainted with Martial Discipline and Polity, save superficially to discourse on't, before the strong advice of those tried spirits, the exiled *Hero's*, and that ever renowned, though unfortunate *Hannibal*. And they find the success answerable. The one at length, (in the midst of his own strength) is basely brav'd by but a Minister of State, imperiously circumscribed by an imaginary circle drawn with a wand about him, and is fain unworthily to stoop and take law from his Inferiour. The other after the loss of divers thousands of lives, glad to escape in a small Vessel, and by the ill carriage of the action, discovered so much of the weakness of the *Asiatiques* his subjects, as gave courage to his enemies in the next Age to invade and subvert the whole *Persian* Empire.

And from such like observations some have drawn this safe rule in Polity, and it holds in Reason, and in Religion too. *In a doubtful case rather to incline to the advice of such as have been vers'd in the business enquired after. Thus in matters of Government, to give ear to the Statesman; in matters of War, to be directed by the Souldier; and in things pertaining to our souls and salvations, not to be led aside by every new Upstart, every private Fanatique spirit, but to be guided by the Church-man.*

Yet it must be confest this rule holds not generally, sometimes it miscarries, and yet when it doth, it carries a fair excuse along with it; *That man can never be tax'd of much, of gross weakness, (unless he before-hand know men to be perfidious) that believes them in their particular professions.*

But this rule though good, yet is not full. Other considerations must be taken in too, (which I make no question *Adonijah* had a respect to) and they likewise according to the quality of the persons, vary exceedingly.

Private men when they consult of their particular interests, may take courses of their own. The narrowness of their personal conditions and relations afford them more liberty, and

their

their errours are neither ſo material nor diſcernable.

But matters of State, publick Buſineſs of Kingdomes, tying us to a kind of formality, muſt be carried in a Majeſtique way of diſcuſſion, and are not to want any complemental circumſtances, which at home may render them leſs venerable, or abroad diminiſh their reputation. And ſo a care is to be had that the men be both great and good, whoſe advice we follow. Great, to prevent envy and contempt; Good, (in account at leaſt) to avoid ſcandal and diſcredit.

If the perſon that gives counſel be mean, though he ſpeak like an Oracle, 'twill be ſlighted; nay, cavilled at. The Wiſe man obſerved ſome ſuch thing in his time, when he tells, *If a rich man ſpake, the people kept ſilence, but if poor, they were ready to ſtop his mouth with that courſe quare, What fellow's this?*

Again, though the men be great, if they be not good too, their advice though as good as *Achitophel's*, will be liable to prejudice. Hence (if I rightly record) the *Lacedemonian Senators* were exceeding coy of their Suffrages to a very profitable propoſition for their Republick, laid before them by a lewd great one; yet under-hand cauſed the very ſame thing to be propounded by one of more upright converſation, and it paſs'd the Houſe with great applauſe.

I might be long in this Argument, but muſt call home.

I find our *Adonijah's* wiſdome approvable in this particular too; He communicates not his deſign with inexperienc'd *Youngſters*, men either of looſe Titles, or leud Conditions; but with ſuch as were of conſpicuous eminency, acquainted with the very bowels and ſecrets of the *State*, and that knew better then any how to ſteer him in his deſired courſe. Of ſuch authority and reputation too by reaſon of their places and perſons, as would exceedingly countenance the action, and draw multitudes of their dependants and others, either out of *fear*, *love*, or *opinion*, to declare themſelves for him, or to ſtagger at leaſt, and ſtand as *Neuters*. The *invincible Joab*, and the *High Prieſt Abiathar*, theſe conſult and adviſe with him; nay, they do more, *they help him forward*.

And this Thirdly, Manifeſts yet ſomething more our young *Princes* wiſdome too. Many will give good counſel, not out

of any love to the person or cause, but to screw themselves into trust, that so upon occasion they may the more certainly overthrow both. *Upon suspitious men (therefore) though they speak well, we are never to lean so hard as (should they treacherously slip aside) to give our selves a fall.* *Absalon* was somewhat this way indiscreet, in so suddenly embracing the advice of *Hushai* the *Archite*.

Again, Some will give counsel, yea, and sincerely too; but if in a business that imports danger, they desire not to be seen in it. You have not such great interest in them, not so far engaged them to you, as to cause them to do more then barely to advise, when perhaps their countenance were as good as their counsel, and would themselves assist in the execution, 'twere yet like to succeed much better. For I think I need not ask leave to think, That *such as can soundly advise (if they be sincere in the business, and alike in other things) are most fit to execute, as knowing best the extent, breadth, depth and length of their own counsels, and able too at home, to furnish themselves afresh, upon the accidental miscarriage of any particular.* I must remember home again.

Our *Adonijah*'s wisdome is herein remarkable too, that such as he doth communicate his design withal, he had before by benefits, observance, and other ways of courtesie and insinuation, so firmly assured to himself, as first, to deal sincerely with him, more to declare themselves for him, most of all to run the hazard of their own counsel, and really to engage themselves in it by *action*. We find it in the last words, *They helped forward*, &c.

To sum up all together, and so to make way to the main Observation.

We have here an able young man, laying a strong foundation of greatness, encouraged to it by the King, his Fathers Love, and that double bounty of nature, comelines of personage, and eldership; assisted in it by those of greatest power and sway in the State, *Abiathar the high Priest*, and *Joab Captain of the Host*, who delude him not with *Court-Holy-Water*, (a piece of falshood, a meer stranger for the most part to true Priests and right Souldiers) but their works speak them as good as their words; they afford him head, and hands, and hearts too in the busi-

nes,

ness? *They advise him, they help him forward.*

And he that shall consideratively read thus far the story, (ignorant of what ensued afterwards) would willingly (I suppose) venture his fortune in the same Bottome with the undertaker. For the design in the whole managing of it discovers such fair apparencies and probabilities of success, as indeed 'tis a matter of just marvel to think how it did miscarry. But here we see *Heavens Power and Prerogative, how it easily alters and overthrows Projects that seem to be founded and rooted in Adamant.*

The Lord doth whatever he will both in Heaven and Earth, and should the whole world conspire in an insurrection to reverse or alter one of his least decrees, their attempts would prove as vain as ridiculous. *For he that dwells in Heaven would laugh them to scorn, the Lord would have them in derision, Psalm* 2. 3. A remarkable place to this purpose is that in the Prophecy of *Isaiah, chap.* 8. *ver.* 9, 10, 11. Where we find a confederacy, an association of divers persons, nay, in likelihood Nations too, against the people of God. Like that combination mentioned by the Psalmist, *Psal.* 83. 6, 7, 8. *Gebal, Ammon, Amalek*, the *Philistines*, with the *Tyrians*, *Assur*, and the children of *Lot*, *Edomites*, *Ishmaelites*, *Moabites*, *Hagarens*, men of divers interests, and not all of one and the same Religion neither, though all aliens to the Common-wealth of *Israel*, and strangers to the Covenant, or like (to come so neer, and no neerer) that holy League in *France*, the cause of so much mischief to that Kingdome, (and by their example to others.) Well, but (for proof of the main Observation) mark what God saith there by his Prophet, *Associate your selves together, and ye shall be broken to pieces; Gird your selves*, (put your selves into a posture of war) be slain to pieces notwithstanding. This judgment (*of being broken to pieces*) we find thrice repeated in that ninth verse, to note the fulness, certainty, and in Gods time, suddenness of such contrivers destruction; and though they all lay their heads together to prevent it, yet it will not do. *Take counsel together*, (ver. 10.) *it shall be brought to nought, make a decree, it shall not stand*; and the Prophet shews his extraordinary Commission for this in the eleventh verse. *The Lord spake this to me with a high hand.* And it is just the same with the example

in the Text. They take counsel here for *Adonijah's* succession, but God (as the *Psalmist* speaks) breaks this counsel, and brings to nought this device. He hath said, *Solomon shall reign*, and he will not alter the thing that is gone forth of his lips; Though all the *Achitophels* and *Statists* upon Earth project the contrary, yet his counsel shall stand *for ever, and the thoughts of his heart from generation to generation*, Psalm 33.11. Wisdome and understanding, and counsel do bravely bring to pass mighty matters, so long as they keep their distance, but when once they'll dare *Theomakisme*, and *Giant*-like wage war against Heaven, then they turn to foolishness. He tells us so that had experience of it, (as in divers other passages, so in this particular of the Text) *There is neither wisdome, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord*, Prov. 21.30.

To reduce this meditation into matter of Use and Practice.

First, It serves for Caution. And the advice in brief will amount to thus much. That we are to take heed as how we follow a multitude: So how we side with a few eminent men in any evil design. The Kingdome of *Israel* (by what we find evidently recorded) was at this time miserably divided; and it was Gods extraordinary mercy towards them, that it broke not forth into the greatest of plagues and mischiefs, *A Civil War*. Read through this only Chapter, and but consideratively weigh what is written, and you'll apprehend as much as I have intimated. Here was at one side the renowned *Joab*, *Generalissimo* of the Hosts of *Israel*, one who had merited that honour by a remarkable act of valour at his entrance, and since for neer forty years had managed it with such success, that who could say, *Joab* ever turned his back upon his enemy? nay, that his sword ever was sheathed undrunken with the blood of the slain? Here went along with him all the Captains of the Host, and it may be presumed (though unmentioned) that far the major part of the souldiers followed their Leaders. Besides, as fair additionals, (not only for shew, but use too) here were all the Blood-Royal, and all the Kings servants that swam with this Current, and imbarqued themselves in the business; and which was almost as much as all, here was the high Priest, head of the *Church in Sacris*, who had walked *so many years* in and out before the people

ple unblameably, and by whose decision and definitive sentence most cases of consciences were *de jure*, determinable; and questionless most of the inferiour Priests by his command, or (at least) the authority of his example, put their hands to this work, and by insisting on that Text about the *first-born* in their *Harangues* and discourses to the people, boldly bore them in hand, that it was the cause of God, the will of Heaven which they pleaded for.

On the other side, there wanted not a Prophet *Nathan*, and a very eminent Priest too, chief of those about the Tabernacle, *Zadok*; and both these had undoubtedly their followers, which did as much for *Solomon*. Here were besides *Benaijah* one of the chief of *David*'s Worthies, together with *Shimei* and *Rei*, persons very remarkable. The *Cherethites*, and *Pelethites* picked choice men of eminent stature and courage, exempted from *Joabs* jurisdiction, and appointed under the foresaid famous *Benaijah*, for the guard of the Kings body.

So that here we find Statesman against Statesman, Captain against Captain, Souldier against Souldier, and (which commonly puzzles the general sort of people most) *Altare contra Altare*, a Prophet joyn'd with a chief Priest to ballance *Abiathar* the Supreme; And the division (I make no question) went proportionably downward to the very skirts of *Aarons* order. And though the advantage (had the quarrel been suddenly to have been comprimis'd by the swords decision) lay clearly in all humane probability on the side of *Adonijah*. Yet knowing upright men measure not their adherence to a cause so much by the rule of power as justice; and the inferiour multitude who wanted the spirit of discerning, and in such bickerings were *sure* to carry away the most blows, could not but be exceedingly staggered and distracted, to observe the strange sidings amongst the powerful, the prudent, and the reputed religious, which sate next the Helm of the State. (In all difficulties undeterminable at home) their opinion of others whom they fancy honest and wiser then themselves, being almost the only Pole-star they steer their course by.

We have drawn a picture of *Israels* condition, and (it was within these few years) so like our own, that it may save the art

of

of a farther Pencil, and changing but the names, serve as well for *England*. For though with us there were not two several Pretenders to the Supreme Title, yet (which doth *tantamount*) to the Supreme Power, there were manifestly; and the case in the Text of elder and younger, Nature and Promise, was not neither (if we look to the bottome of the business) a stranger to our Controversie.

What God in mercy prevented amongst them, he hath in judgment (the fury of his indignation) permitted to fall upon us. We have had the miserable experience of a sad, miserable Civil War, and that accompanyed with as much division between men of all sorts, degrees and conditions, and prosecuted with as much Heathenish heart-burning, as (I believe) since there were men enough in the world to make up such a politique Society as a Kingdome, never more in any. And because Civil strifes are never so hotly pursued as Religious, coldness (which in other contentions is presumed to proceed from moderation) being not admitted the favour of such a construction in this, (to exasperate mens minds more) This War was at first (by the canning of some) so Christian'd, and the Laws of the Land, the Liberty of the Subject, and I know not what other Priviledges, brought in as Gospel; yea, and the Solemnity and Sacrament of an Oath likewise added, to terrifie back-sliders, discover enemies, and associate friends more firmly. Well, we fought, and who would have thought that the noise (though once we find in the case of the barbarous *Midianites*, Judg. 7. 12.) of a few empty Pitchers, and some fiery Lights, could have engaged a peaceable and wise people against one another so fully, so foolishly. I need not acquaint you with the success. He is a strange stranger in our *Israel*, that knows not what hath come to pass in our dayes. A Success (I confess) so extraordinary unexpected, sudden and compleat, as would have staggered any faith, not built upon a rock; set off any Cause (if but tolerably handsome) even to an envious degree of beauty and glory; yet (by the secret judgment of God) it contributed so little to this, that the prevailing party never found themselves at so great a loss, as when they had gained all; never felt themselves so weak, as when there was not an enemy to stand before them.

For

For falling now upon the division of the spoil, not without visible disagreement, (confident likewise to draw the Curtain, and discover the great Design) there did follow such a general alienation of affections, such an averſion from what people before so exceedingly over-much doted upon, that a Parallel to it can hardly be re-mark'd in any story, and which (by the merciful disposition of God Almighty) hath produced the happiness which (for above fifteen moneths) we have seen and felt.

To conclude this first Use of Caution. To you of this Honourable City.

Let us from henceforth take heed how we be carried about with every wind of doctrine, or every blaſt of present Success, that we believe not every spirit, or powerful perſwasion, or great example, for divers that boast themselves of God are not such; many false Prophets are come forth into the world.

Let it be enough, that by glorious glittering pretences we have been cheated out of our *Religion*, *Loyalty*, Property; may our very Reason, that by strong *dazeling delusions*, we have been *cajol'd* into such a Pit-fall, from which only the Almighty power and extraordinary Goodneſſe did redeem us. If our own harms will not make us beware, neither the Texts Example, nor any humane Instruction can possibly work upon us. And the next blow of God's hand must needs be far heavier, because we have so soon forgotten the grief of our former misery, and the comfort of our present Deliverance.

Secondly, for *Comfort*. To stay our hearts as with Flagons of Wine, when we consider, that not one word of Heavens mouth, made to our own souls or others, shall fall to the Ground. Is thy faith assaulted concerning the truth of Gods promises, made either to the whole Church, as the Body in the general; or to thy self, as a Member in particular.

Take heed of giving too far and free Entertainment to such Suggestions. The Lords hand is not shortned, He's commonly better then his word, as good as his word (to be sure) he is always. Though, for the present, perhaps thou mayest perceive nothing but, no Shadow of Likelyhood, all things to run to a Retro-

grade

grade course to their seeming accomplishment. Yet possesse thy Soul with patience, stand and see the Salvation of the Lord, rest upon his All-sufficiency, believe with *Abraham*, even above hope, *&c.* He doth divers times work out his ends by means, in our shallow conceits apparently contrary. He's so good that he would not suffer evill to be, unlesse he were also so powerful as to be able to draw good out of it. Nothing can make void the purposes and promises of Heaven. Though a *Joab*, though an *Abiathar*, though all men on Earth, and Divels in Hell, attempt their Nullity: yet Maugre all Opposition, they shall stand in force, and be made good to those whom they concern; that Word of truth hath spoken it, not one word of whose Truth, shall return empty, *Heaven and Earth shall passe away, but, &c.*

Third, for *Direction*, to steer our course on the troublesome Sea of this World, that so we may arrive at the Haven where we would be; and that is in all our Intendments to take Heaven along with us, not to depend upon new Truths, pretended to be concealed for so many Generations, and now revealed to I know not whom, for I know not what *fanciful purposes*, but to make Gods clear revealed Word (with *David*) our Counsellor, and Warrant, and then we shall be sure to have either the Summe of our Desires, or that which is better for us. Then either our purposes shall have a good Issue, or else our failing in them shall be more for our Good.

Instance: You of this City, desire to be rich, and in places of Honour and Eminency, and such desires (if attended with their due Qualifications) are for ought I know not amisse neither. Now *Solomon* tells us, that riches and honour are in the hands of the Almighty: *Length of Dayes are in his right hand, and in his left Riches and Honour. Prov.* And if we'l credit the Divel he'l tell us that all these are his too, once to be sure we know he told the very Owner so to his Face, *Matth.* 4. and where he is likely to gain more belief, he will certainly be more forward to boast his vain Title. And were there not too many in the World that lent a willing ear to him; the forbidden paths of Bribery, Flattery, Extortion, Over-reaching, Cozenage, and Cunning; would not be so crowded with Passengers, and the allowable Road of Truth and Honesty, fair upright, and ingenious Dealing, so thinly frequented. But

But brag the Divel never so confidently, of these and all other good things, God is the true *Proprietary*; and we must have and hold them of him, if we will have and hold them at all, or long, or with Comfort. We take an ill Match in hand if we go about to wrestle with him, and wrest them from him by Violence. God is a liberal God, and yet in some Sense he's a hand-fast God too; maugre all the World, he can keep his hands shut if he please, and untill he be pleased to open it, we cannot be filled with Plenteousnesse. In all our Enterprises therefore, let us be sure to have him to friend, to have his allowance at least, if not command, in the main Intendments of our Life, otherwise (let me tell you) 'tis neither the Plotting of our heads, nor the Sollicitousnesse of our hearts, not the Drudgery of our hands, nor the whole concurrence of our created strength, improv'd by all accessory procurable Assistances, that can finally render our attempts successeful. *Adam* may make himself a Garment, but it shall not cover his nakedness; *Jonah* may build him a booth, but it shall not defend him from the heat of the Sun; *Peter* may toil all night at fishing, but shall catch nothing. *Though we rise up early, and lie down late, and eat the bread of sorrow, yet is our labour in vain, except the Lord give the blessing*, Psalm 127. 2.

I might illustrate this by almost infinite instances out of Story. Take the Texts example for all.

Here is an able eldest Son using the strongest humane means to settle himself in the Seat of his Father: Ordering this affair with as much polity and discretion, as the best heads in the Kingdome could furnish him with. Many advantages he had of his Competitor, both the Word *and the* Sword (if I may so speak) *were on his side. The High Priest and Captain of the Host: The latter of which alone was so powerful in the State, that* David *himself (though a King well-beloved of his Subjects) confesseth him too hard for him, and for the murder of divers of his dear friends, durst not punish him. Yet see notwithstanding all these interests, assistances, probabilities, Heaven overswaies and determines the contrary: Go but to the latter end of the Chapter, and there we shall read that* Solomon *is King. So true is that of*

the holy Ghost, the foolishness of God is wiser then mans wisdome, and his weakness stronger then their power.

But stay; was indeed God's hand in this business against *Adonijah*? How then durst either *Joab* or *Abiathar* move so much as a finger for him? Nay, how durst he himself take counsel and plead his own Title, when that Wonderful Counsellour and Supreme Judge both of Heaven and Earth was in the Cause his adversary?

1. But indeed for him, first, I can easily satisfie my self without the puzzle of a wonderment. A Crown is a strong temptation, and where an apprehension of compassing it gets footing in the brain, it infatuates, corrupts our judgments, and inveigles us to any impious, desperate undertaking. *Cæsar*, thought a Kingdome worth an oath-breaking. And I have observed it, that Religion hath not such another shrewd enemy as ambition. Look into the Annals of all ages, search the Records of time from the beginning, and you'll scarce find one of a thousand that have let go their hold, or relinquish'd probabilities of Soveraignty, out of a meer respect to conscience.

Secondly, For *Joab* too, I marvel not at all at him. A man he was it seems by the whole course and tenour of his actions, of a violent, over-heady spirit. One that look'd no farther (though a Subject, and an *Israelite*) for a Law, then his own will. He had slain *Absolon* expressly against the King's Commandement, and *Abner* and *Amasa* against both Gods and the Kings; And if he now beard Heaven by opposing with a high hand its decrees, which had so often before set nought and slight by it, what need we wonder.

But for *Abiathar* me-thinks to do so, cannot but rouze our admiration: For God's high Priest to set himself against God, and to oppose his will and purposes, must needs be to those that consider the circumstances of the story and person, a matter of just astonishment. Shall we say for him by way of excuse, or extenuation, that perchance he might not be clearly and through-

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ly acquainted with God's will in this particular. We would fain be as favourable to him as might be, but this in reason allow him we cannot. For then (unless we'll argue like *Turks*) *Solomon* spoke amiss to him, *chap.* 2. 26. When he told him he had deserved death; for supposing him ignorant do but shew me what so great evil he had done.

But indeed faulty he was, I make no question, knowingly and presumptuously faulty too. God had sent the Prophet *Nathan* to bestow a second name upon *Solomon*, a name of such an happy signification, as might almost alone direct *Abiathar* to the Almighty's intention, *Jedidiah* the beloved of the Lord. And that some clearer intimation of God's pleasure was the ground of *Davids* oath to *Bathsheba* by the Lord, that her son should reign after him, may be more then probably conjectured. For can we suppose that *David* a Prophet of the Lord, would so resolutely (without limitation, or Saint *James* his reservation, *if the Lord will*) swear, that *Solomon* should reign after him, without a Warrant from him by whom Kings reign, and the Thrones of Princes are established. And that this being such a publick business, and necessary to be known too, should be concealed from *Abiathar*, no circumstances can make likely. I take no pleasure in this Argument; Give me leave from hence only to note unto you, That the best sometimes over-shoot themselves grosly; That not a Miter, not an Ephod, not the holy Calling of Priesthood, doth make us so universally good, but that we sometimes run into a *Premunire* against Heaven, transgress the Laws of our Maker like other men. We are earthly Vessels, kneaded of the same Clay, shap'd of the same mould whereof all mankind are fashioned. Prophets we are, but yet like unto our brethren, (as *Moses*) Men of God, but yet but men, and so subject to whatsoever sins are incident to man's nature as well as others. *Abiathar* here though the *High Priest*, and headman of the Church, yet led aside by some corrupt respects, goes about (as much as in him lies) to frustrate Gods promise and appointment. *He helps forward* Adonijah.

Well, but all this while we have condemned them; how

may we now justifie God? Was there no partiality, no iniquity in him, to prefer the younger before the elder? Primogeniture by his own Law, had the priviledge of a double portion, and doth he now (for no wickedness neither that we read of) bar *Adonijah* from this Prerogative? Shall not the Judge of all the world do right? Shall he do any man wrong? that be far from him.

A sw. Twofold. 1. General. 2. Particular.

First, God is a free and liberal Agent. He doth and may do whatsoever he will both in Heaven and Earth. His will is the rule of Justice; for though some will have Justice to be the reason of his will, (blasphemously enough, if well sifted) yet 'tis confest on all hands, that he wills nothing, but what is just. When therefore we hear him clearly enjoyning any thing, we are not (in our weak way) to dispute the lawfulness of it, but with all alacrity to hasten its execution. For God is equally as unable to command, as to commit injustice; *All his waies are judgment and truth*, Psal. ——

The *Canonists* affirm of the Pope, *nunquam ligat sibi manus*, he can never tie his own hands, never limit and restrain his own power. They write him down *a God on Earth* and therefore herein they will have him like the *God of Heaven*. And your greatest Statists of Laws in Monarchies, tell us, that they bind only those that are under them. A Coactive power they have not, serve only for *Direction* to such as are above them. Besides, we grant that Laws may be dispenc'd withal, nay, nullified by the same power by which they were made, and that the ground and reason of a good Law is alwaies justice, though the letter in some particular application may be otherwise. Hence that usual Say (considering the unsufficiency of Laws, to meet with those millions of circumstances) (one of which may alter a case) *Better a private mischief then a publick inconvenience.*

These Observations (some of them at least) may not be perhaps (in a Metaphysical transcendent consideration) utterly incompatible with the Almighty. For we find God (for the present) to have commanded contrary to the letter (to be sure) of

his

his own Law, As in the *Israelites* spoyling the *Egyptians*. Nay in a weightier businesse then the Text holds forth, we find the younger accepted, the Elder rejected. Nay for an Earthly Kingdome too, the point in hand (though attended with other Circumstances) we find *David* preferred before *Eliab*.

Secondly, But this Discourse of Gods absolute power to do whatsoever he will, and that all being truly his both in Heaven and Earth, he may dispose of his own as it pleaseth him, will perchance scarce satisfie some, and indeed let it be confest, something farther, and (I conceive) better may be said to the point.

Many things are holden in the World by Prescription, Custome put into the Ballance with Law cleerly out weighs it, and then time out of mind we deem no Title better. Now *Israels* case was different from that of other Nations. These had been from their very beginnings as *Commoners*, left to the Light of the Law of Nature, and to such Constitutions, as they were able to make out from that; But *Israel* was Gods Inclosure, continued by his special particular care under Pupillage as his own peculiar, and the Government amongst them to the very day of this Consultation went not by Succession but Election, and in that, they were never suffer'd to carve out to themselves, whomsoever they fanci'd as the most fit, but as the Power, so the continual Exercise of it was only in God. From *Moses* to *Samuel* about five hundred years, they had still rulers, when they had any, of his appointment. In all that time (we read not) of a Son succeeding his Father, But heaven according to several Exigencies singled them out several men, of several Tribes and Families, of proportionable Abilities, to sit at the Helm of the State. During the Life of *Samuel*, they require a King like other Nations, but a King still of Gods choosing, not their own.

They have *Saul* and he hath a Son both good and valiant, yet he in his Life time perceives the Kingdome destined to a Stranger; The Father indeed storms at it, but the Son seems well content, and though after both their Deaths, *Abner* sets another Son of *Sauls* upon the Throne, yet the cause thrives not, the whole Kingdome at length devolves unto *David*. So that if

Jonathan

Jonathan or *Sauls* other Son had no wrong; neither had here *Adonijah*; And if God had not limited himself by an after assurance to *David*, he might have dealt with him and his posterity, as he did with *Saul* and his, given the Kingdome to any *Israelite*; now however he hath his whole off-spring to choose in, and might without the least injustice have fastned upon any issue of his as well as *Solomon*. So that as St. *Augustine* in another case, *Huic fit misericordia, illi non injuria*; God was favourable to *Solomon*, did no injury to *Adonijah*.

Considering then that the Common-wealth of *Israel*, was so constituted at the Beginning, and had so continued many hundred years, that none could pretend to the Principality by Filiation, and therefore at this time fell not under the Cognizance of that Law of *Primogeniture*, (which God (surceasing his claim) suffer'd it to do in the Ages following.) Considering too, that as the right of Election was in God, so he had continually all along exercis'd the power of it without interruption; for *Joab* and *Abiathar*, boldly to undertake the pointing out of a Supreme Magistrate without his special Warrant and Commission, nay to set up one when he had appointed another, was a Presumption worthy the Vengeance inflicted upon them afterwards. For we find (and I thought not fit to conclude without this Note) they paid deerly for it (and so shall all those sooner or later that attempt upon any of Gods Reservations) they had better been out of Employment then have had such Wages. The one loseth his Life, the other his Office, and Heaven is to be admir'd for the Certainty and Justice of its Dispensations in both. *Joab* had before committed divers Murthers, and so powerful he was in the State, that Vengeance by the hand of the present Magistrate durst not seize on him. This Action of his (Springing from the same root) pays those old Scores, and as he had shed mans blood, so by man is his Blood powred forth. *Abiathar* was of the house of *Eli*, against whom we have Two several prophetical Denunciations, 1 *Sam.* Chap. 2, 3. and this his Stickling for, and Siding with *Adonijah* here, causeth his Removal from the Priesthood; and so we see those Predictions likewise made good by their accomplishment.

And

And this consideration well sifted (would the Time, and the Space allotted for this exercise bear it) would afford us fresh matter of Contemplation and Discourse, about the certain, yet secret ways of Providence.

First, *How the wise Disposer of all things, turns (many times) mans greatest Shame, into his own greatest Glory.*

Secondly, *How our very Sins (though Traitors to us their Owners) prove Trusty Executioners of the Almighties purposes, and our wickedst Actions (so over-ordered) as they become the Instrumental Examples of Heavens Justice.*

But these will fall more fitly into some Texts in the Second Chapter.

To the only wise and powerful Trinity, Three persons, One God, be ascribed, *&c. Amen.*

FINIS.